



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

PLANNING UPDATE #1 January 2000

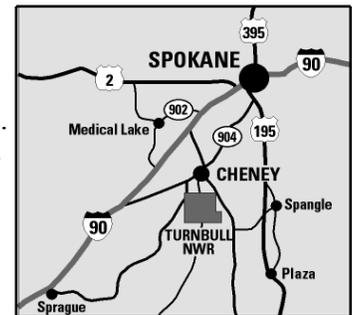
Upcoming Public Scoping Meetings

February 29, 2000
6:00 - 9:00 P.M.
Cheney High School Library

March 1, 2000
6:00 - 9:00 P.M.
Spokane Falls Community College Building 17 Lounges A, B, C

Habitat Management Planning Complete

Draft Environmental Assessments (EA) of the Habitat and Fire Management Plans were made available for public review during Fall, 1998. On January 20, 1999 an open house was held in Cheney to present management alternatives and to provide additional opportunity for groups and individuals to comment. The Fire EA received one verbal and one written comment. The Habitat EA received seven verbal and 13 written comments. Respondents to the Fire EA supported prescribed fire, & continued coordination in smoke management & notification; respondents to the Habitat EA supported the Ecosystem Management



Alternative. Specific issues addressed in the Final Habitat EA that were brought up during public review included land protection to achieve off-refuge issues, road construction, livestock grazing and commercial timber harvest, and control of noxious weeds. Detailed responses to public comments are contained in Appendix D of the Final Habitat EA. Following completion of the final EA and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in August of 1999, the

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So, onward to.....Comprehensive Conservation Planning

As required by the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is starting to work on a long-term management plan for Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). This plan, called a **Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)**, will serve as a guide for managing the Refuge over the

next 15 years. The recently signed Habitat and Fire Management Plans will be incorporated into the CCP. Aspects of management that will be addressed in detail include the public use program & off-refuge initiatives to protect habitat & water quality in the channeled scablands ecosystem.



The mission of the NWRS is: “to administer a national network of lands & waters for the conservation, management & where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife & plant resources & their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present & future generations of America.” (NWRS Improvement Act).



What Are Refuges About?

National Wildlife Refuges are lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation’s fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

The National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) comprises the world’s

largest collection of lands set aside specifically for wildlife. Refuges provide important habitat for native plants and animals. Refuges offer a variety of wildlife oriented recreational opportunities, and many have visitor centers, hiking trails, and environmental education programs. The NWRS is the only network of federal lands managed just for wildlife.

Activities Enjoyed at Turnbull & Other Refuges

The 2200 acre Public Use Area within Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge supports and encourages the following activities:

- Wildlife viewing
- Photography
- Hiking
- Environmental Education
- 5-mile Auto Tour Route

The remainder of the Refuge is closed to public entry & is conserved for wildlife habitat. A cornerstone of the Refuge’s Public Use Program is its unique & popular Environmental Education Program, which now hosts over 5,000 students annually.

Wildlife First

On refuges, wildlife & habitat are the highest priority in management. It is important to recognize that there are laws & policies that guide public use on National Wildlife Refuges. Six wildlife-dependent uses are identified by the Refuge Improvement Act:

- Environmental Education
- Interpretation
- Wildlife Observation
- Wildlife Photography
- Hunting
- Fishing

Planning will ensure that recreational opportunities remain compatible with the purposes for which each refuge was established.

Preliminary Issues and Opportunities

The Planning Team identified the following questions identified for scoping public opinion:

- Does the public wish to see further developments in public use, i.e. improved access, public use area expansion, more facilities, interpretive signs, facilitated activities?
- What effect would expanded pub-

lic uses have on wildlife populations & their distribution?

- How will urban expansion affect the Refuge?
- Should the Refuge remained closed to hunting?
- Should the USFWS support community needs for environmental education & interpretation at the Refuge?

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Habitat Management Planning Complete (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

Ecosystem Management Alternative was selected as the preferred alternative (copies of these documents are available at the Refuge). The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service began implementing the preferred alternative over the past several months. Actions taken include initiating wetland restoration work on

Reeves Lake, thinning overstocked stands of ponderosa pine forest utilizing Refuge crews, & issuing a Special Use Permit to a commercial timber operator to complete thinning in a 226 acre unit along the Refuge's northeastern boundary. This year, prescribed fire was limited to broadcast & slash pile burning in thinned areas.

Tentative Planning Schedule

- ◆Feb. & March - Scoping meetings to identify issues & opportunities.
- ◆Through Aug 2000 – Defining issues, developing alternatives & alternative strategies.
- ◆August 2000 – Public review of preliminary alternatives.
- ◆November 2000 – Draft CCP/ Environmental Assessment released. Comment period for 45 days.
- ◆March 2001 – Final CCP/Environmental

More Information on Planning

In October 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) Improvement Act. This law establishes the mission of the Refuge System, a new process of determining compatible use activities on refuges, & requires us to prepare CCPs for each refuge. The Refuge Improvement Act states that, first & foremost, the NWRS must focus on wildlife conservation.

Our goal is to prepare a CCP which will:

- Outline Refuge management priorities for the next 15 years.
- Identify significant Refuge resources & how best to conserve these resources.
- Identify opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent public uses.
- Identify the Refuge's role in the local community & as a national

Preliminary Issues and Opportunities (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

- How will Washington State Parks' Columbia Plateau Trail, which may triple visitation in a closed area of the Refuge, affect Refuge management? And what limitations are necessary to protect wildlife?
- The Habitat Management Plan includes objectives to protect water quality & sources, key habitats affecting Refuge resources from out-

side the current boundary, & landscape linkages & corridors. Several tools (education, voluntary conservation, incentive programs, partnerships, land acquisition from willing sellers) exist to accomplish this. Which of these tools can be used to effectively conserve the lands, wildlife & habitat of the channeled scablands ecosystem?



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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WE ARE ON THE WEB:

[HTTP://www.r1.fws.gov/turnbull/turnbull.html](http://www.r1.fws.gov/turnbull/turnbull.html)

Get Involved...It's YOUR Refuge!

Your participation is critical to the success of our comprehensive conservation planning effort.

Share your ideas with us by answering the questions included in the enclosed survey, & mailing or faxing your responses to the Refuge office.

The Refuge will host two Scoping Meetings to hear more directly from you. We need to hear your concerns and ideas for the Refuge's future. We hope you can attend a Scoping Meeting. If you cannot attend and

have concerns or ideas, please call or write the Refuge Manager, Nancy Curry, at (509)235-4723. Our e-mail address is:

r1rw_tbl_nwr@fws.gov.

